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"The point of view is made by literature." In this instance it is not too much to say that literature has been made by a point of view, enhanced by a sense of humor.

BLANCHE MARY KELLY.

American Negro Slavery, by Ulrich Bonnell Phillips, Ph.D. New York. D. Appleton and Company, 1919.

Professor Phillips' book is an attempt to sketch the rise, nature, and influence of Negro slavery in the regions of its concentration.

American Negro Slavery covers a good deal of ground in its five hundred and fourteen pages. There are chapters on what most of us in our boyhood used to associate with the "romantic" side of slavery, in which we renew acquaintance with such men and institutions as Las Casas, Sir John Hawkins, the Dutch West India Company and the slave-markets. Also, there are chapters on tobacco, rice, cotton, and sugar, which we recall as influences that tended to make slavery a fixture in this country. There are other chapters that recount the rise of moral scruples in Colonial times and their prostitution at a later date to political expedients. Finally, there are pictures, charming pictures indeed, of plantation life in which is fully satisfied the conventional idea of the plantation Negro as a sort of "double-shuffling" and "possum-hunting" individual.

All this is enough to show that what Professor Phillips has done is not so much to give us a new book as to furnish us with complete information with which we may correct and augment our somewhat hazy and indefinite notions of American slavery. The majority of people have obtained their conceptions of slave conditions from novels, and rather poor ones at that, and from sensational films. Even where the desire for knowledge was more pretentious the only material at hand was of a violently biased nature meant not to explore and portray facts but to exploit traditions and prejudices. There is probably no one subject in American history that is more thoroughly and more generally misunderstood than the ante-bellum situation of the Negro. The consequence is that, failing in our knowledge of the Negro's

history, we make but futile attempts to adjust him to our society.

The sanity of Professor Phillips and his adherence to historical accuracy will be revealed to many minds in his persistently implied refusal to admit that slavery was ever universally in the nation the moral issue that fancy or interest have sometimes made it. The author does not defend the introduction of slavery into this country, nor even justify its continuance. It is too late in the day to do that. He rather suggests that too many politicians have been cloaking themselves in a glory to which they are not entitled. Most men will agree that traditions in anti-slavery circles cannot always be relied upon.

With regard to the treatment of slaves Professor Phillips would urge what decency will force us to admit, that slave-owners were not always the wicked persons that they have been painted. He rather pushes the point that the South as a whole was constantly engaged in getting the good out of a bad bargain. Thus, on page 343 we read that "the slave plantation regime, after having wrought the initial and irreparable misfortune of causing the Negroes to be imported, did at least as much as any possible system in the period could have done toward adapting the bulk of them to life in a civilized community." Or again on page 401: "Plantation slavery had in strictly business aspects at least as many drawbacks as it had attractions. But in the large it was less a business than a life; it made fewer fortunes than it made men."

Such considerations do not excuse slavery. No one says that they do. But the question is: Could not the moral sense of the nation have been satisfied just as fully by economic, as by political action? Governor F. H. Pierpont of Virginia said, in 1865, that the condition of the Negroes was hard since they had "the theory of the politicians and the dogma of the divines against them." On the side of abolition, however, the politicians set themselves a task, the magnitude and treatment of which they were in most cases incapable of understanding.

Slavery was bound to disappear because of its inherent economic weakness. Certain well-known utterances prove that from the days of Washington and Jefferson considerable doubt had been thrown on the value of slavery, while the belief was

steadily growing that slavery was a detriment to the best interests of the community. One cannot but regret that the work of Raymond, Dew, Goodloe, and Ruffin was set aside in favor of the more theatrical but less substantial efforts of politicians. Had such a substitution not taken place, we might have been spared the dark days of Reconstruction, from the evil consequences of which the Negro race is even yet suffering. Surely we would have been spared that unethical course of conduct which permitted the exposure of Negroes to vagrancy, idleness, famine, and in far too many instances to death. Professor Phillips' chapters on the economic and business aspects of slavery will prove to many the most interesting in his book.

If it should be urged that in view of the circumstances a violent disruption by legislative action was the only possible way of restoring justice, it could be answered that certainly by 1850, the merely business aspects of slavery were showing that enforced slave labor was a losing game. We have it on first-rate evidence, for example, that the people of Virginia were prepared for the emancipation of the blacks long before the Civil War.

In view of the existing ignorance regarding the details of the Negro's past it is a praiseworthy thing that the author has given us his reflections in an attractive and popular style. It is a distinct relief to meet with a writer who does not interpret his "scientific" obligations in the sense that he must be heavy and unreadable. Perhaps some will object to the great bulk of the book. Of course, Professor Phillips touches upon a great variety of subjects connected with the rise and development of slavery. But there are times especially in the early part of the work when one feels that the author could have helped the reader by a little condensation. This is trivial where there is so much else of worth.

T. B. MORONEY, S.T.D.
